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24 June 1949

MEMORANDUM OF DISCUSSION WITH GENERAL VAN FLEET CONCERNING PROJECT FIEND

I saw General Van Fleet today to brief him on Project FIEND. I outlined to him the basic aspects of the project, including the use of the Albanian Committee as cover, the maximum and minimum objectives, and some indication of its stages. General Van Fleet's reaction was wholly favorable and in conclusion he said he considered that this project is an absolute necessity.

General Van Fleet inquired as to whether or not we would use the Greek mainland for any part of our major operation and I replied that undoubtedly there would be reconnaissance operations launched on the Greek side of the border, but that we presently contemplated the major supply operations would be accomplished by small boats operating possibly from Corfu, and by aircraft.

I emphasized that we do not set ourselves up as experts in this field but that we did feel that the very special situation existing in Albania at the present time should be exploited to the fullest. He thoroughly agreed with this. He advised me that a local intelligence net was set up by the 8th Greek Division and conducted short-range intelligence penetration across into Albania. This intelligence net had reported to him that conditions were ripe for revolt in Albania, that 20% of the population is now actively opposed to the Russian controlled regime and that as soon as operations started 80% of the population would support the insurrection.

He told me that he had a large number of Italian rifles on hand in Greece, and that if we wanted them these rifles could be exchanged for American rifles on the pretext that ammunition supplies for the Italian weapons was becoming increasingly difficult. He also has on hand 3,000 Bren guns which have recently been withdrawn from Greek troops and replaced by BAR's. He said both types of weapons are in general use by all sides in the Balkans and their use by us could not be traced to United States sources.

In reply to my question on the Russian strength he stated his best estimate was that there are about 500 Russians in Albania, most of them technicians. In reply to his question as to when the shooting would start, I said that our plans were not firm but that I believed late fall was the earliest possible time and that it might be necessary because of snow to wait until spring. To this he replied that he considered every effort should be made to pull the job off this fall. He considered that conditions were ideal and that it is most important to take advantage of present favorable elements.

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This is an important memo and should be kept in the file covering this question. We may well draw a conclusion to refer to it again, for with substance and persistence aspects of this project should be directed by J. Edgar Hoover.

I have asked the Weddings Committee to take heed not to be in to question. I have asked the Van Fleet Committee to take heed not to be in to question. I have asked the Van Fleet Committee to take heed not to be in to question.

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He told me that there was considerable talk among the Greeks that the Americans and British are actively working on the Albanian problem in Italy and in Cairo.

I told him that [] was our senior representative and would maintain contact with him in Greece. General Van Fleet seemed pleased with this and indicated that he had known [] before. He asked to be allowed to advise his five top staff officers of FIEND. I agreed to this. They are Brigadier General Jenkins, Colonel Phillips, Colonel Trimble, Colonel Bessette and a new G-2 yet to be assigned. In this connection he told me that one of the main purposes of his visit was to obtain the assignment of a top-notch G-2. He said he had been disappointed in the intelligence provided by other agencies, including CIA. He felt that there was a vast store of intelligence to be obtained if procedures were established for the full interrogation of all captured guerrillas and defectors.

I asked whether or not he had conducted any air reconnaissance over Albania. He said this had been strictly avoided, and although charges were being continuously made by the Albanians, Yugoslavians and Bulgarians he personally believes there have been no border violations either by aircraft or by ground troops.

As I left he asked whether or not I knew []. I told him [] was coming as Deputy Chief of Operations. He was thoroughly pleased with this and said that during the war [] had been his Operations Officer and that he regarded [] as a future Chief of Staff of the Army.

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